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Visual Images and the Chinese Exclusion

Part A.

An anti-Chinese bias developed during the last half of the nineteenth century. Dime novels were the reading material of choice for most Americans. The simple, often repetitious plots and colorful illustrations captured the eye of the average American, particularly young men and boys. The tendency of writers to stereotype the characters depicted, as they did in the case of their portrayal of the Chinese as individuals who spent their time in opium dens and abducting white women who would become addicted to the drug and be forced into prostitution, contributed to the development of an anti-Chinese bias in America. Examine the following example of a dime novel cover, and complete the analysis questions.

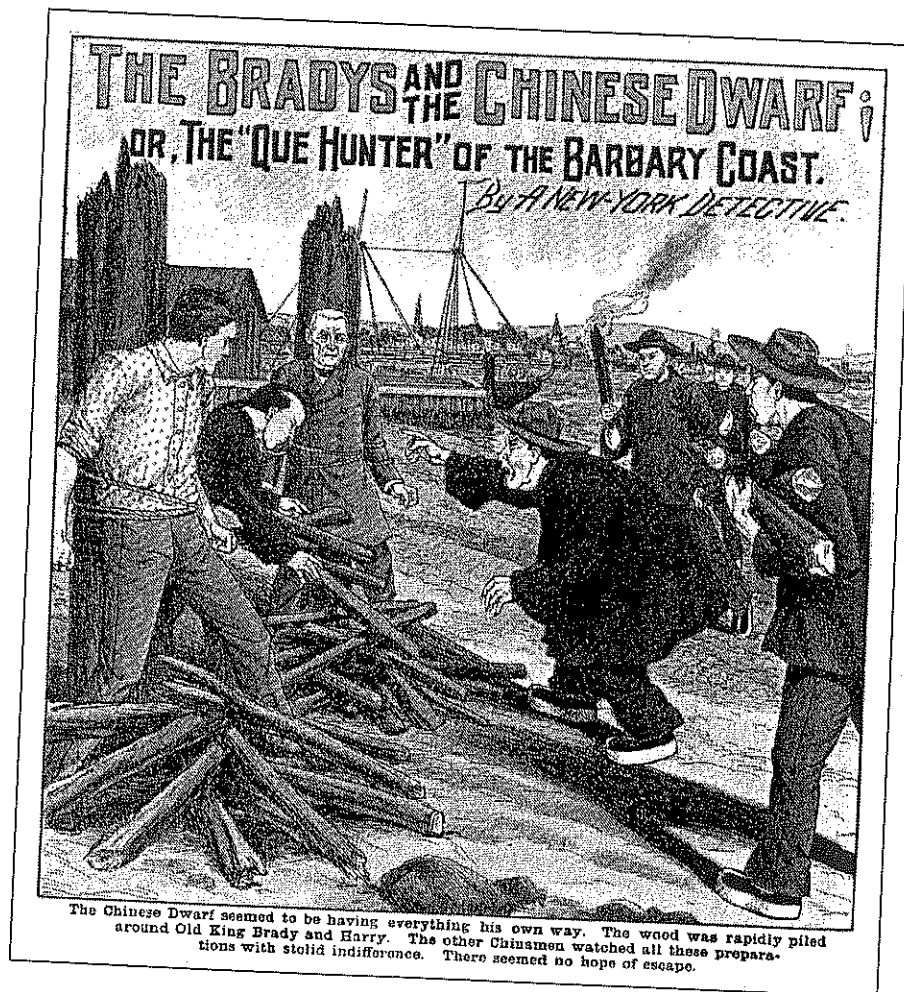


Fig. 4.1.

Fig. 4.1. *The Bradys and the Chinese Dwarf; or, The "Que Hunter" of the Barbary Coast*, by a New-York Detective. http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/1880_chinese.html. Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

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1. What is the message of the illustration?
2. What is its purpose?
3. Is the message more verbal or visual? Explain your answer.
4. Who do you think was the intended audience?
5. What stereotypic images appear in the illustration?
6. How did illustrations like this encourage anti-Chinese bias?

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Part B.

The early labor movements in America, such as the Knights of Labor, opposed the admission of Chinese immigrants to the United States on the grounds that they were taking jobs from "native" Americans. Read the following excerpt from an anti-Chinese pamphlet produced by a member of the Knights of Labor in 1878, and answer the questions that follow. Be prepared for class discussion.

China's Menace to the World

by Thomas Magee

MEN FROM CHINA come here to do LAUNDRY WORK. The Chinese Empire contains 600,000,000 (six hundred millions) inhabitants.

The supply of these men is inexhaustible.

Every one doing this work takes BREAD from the mouths of OUR WOMEN.

So many have come of late, that to keep at work, they are obliged to cut prices.

And now, we appeal to the public, asking them will they be partners to a deal which is only one of their many onward marches in CRUSHING OUT THE INDUSTRIES OF OUR COUNTRY from our people by grasping them themselves. Will you oblige the AMERICAN LAUNDRIES to CUT THE WAGES OF THEIR PEOPLE by giving your patronage to the CHINAMEN?

We invite you to give a thorough investigation of the STEAM LAUNDRY BUSINESS OF THE COUNTRY; in doing so you will find that not only does it GIVE EMPLOYMENT TO A VAST NUMBER OF WOMEN, but a great field of labor is opened to a great number of mechanics of all kinds whose wages are poured back into the trade of the country.

If this understandable element "THE CHINESE EMIGRANTS" are not stopped coming here, we have no alternative but that we will have California and the Pacific Slope's experience, and the end will be that our industries will be absorbed UNLESS we live down to their animal life.

We say in conclusion that the CHINAMAN is a labor consumer of our country without the adequate returns of prosperity to our land as is given by the labor of our people to our glorious country.

Our motto should be:

OUR COUNTRY, OUR PEOPLE, OUR GOD, AND OUR NATIVE LAND.

Pioneer Laundry Workers Assembly, K. of L. Washington, D.C. . . .

. . . China is no longer shut; China is open, and China's only grievance may be that the world, in its turn, may build an anti-Chinese legal wall against the entrance of her innumerable industrial armies. The world does not know much about China yet; it will soon, however, make more of her acquaintance. She has been hidden in the night of exclusion, oriental sleep, and mental stagnation; she is emerging into the daylight of progress, and toward an activity such as the modern world has never seen. China has been ignorantly despised, but China is worthy of all respect. She is quickly throwing off the clogs of her progress, and is rapidly coming up with the open world in the race of life, with advantages in her favor that cannot well be surpassed. The man who can run for a few minutes in a short race, and make very

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fast time, is not the equal of him who can run all day. The Chinese are all-day runners, and those who compete with them will need to rise early and sit up late. China has untiring industrial ability, unsurpassed staying powers, and a degree of patience which no other nation can pretend to equal. Friend and enemy of China should know these facts. Few do know them.¹

1. What job did the Chinese perform?
2. Why did the Knights of Labor oppose the entrance of more Chinese to America?
3. What is the appeal of the motto "Our country, our people, our God, and our native land"?
4. Why did Magee say that the Chinese were to be respected?
5. Why did Magee compare the Chinese to an all-day runner?

¹Thomas Magee, *China's Menace to the World: From the Forum to the Public*, 1878. Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Daniel A. P. Murray Pamphlets Collection.

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Part C.

In 1880, the U.S. Congress approved a treaty with China that restricted the immigration of Chinese to America. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited Chinese immigration to the United States. Read the following excerpts, and complete the questions for discussion.

Treaty Regulating Immigration from China

November 17, 1880

ART. I. Whenever in the opinion of the Government of the United States, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States, or their residence therein, affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country, or to endanger the good order of the said country or of any locality within the territory thereof, the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit, or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it. The limitation or suspension shall be reasonable and shall apply only to Chinese who may go to the United States as laborers, other classes not being included in the limitations. Legislation taken in regard to Chinese laborers will be of such a character only as is necessary to enforce the regulation, limitation or suspension of immigration, and immigrants shall not be subject to personal maltreatment or abuse.

ART. II. Chinese subjects, whether proceeding to the United States as teachers, students, merchants, or from curiosity, together with their body and household servants, and Chinese laborers who are now in the United States, shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord, and shall be accorded all the rights, privileges, immunities and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation.

ART. III. If Chinese laborers, or Chinese of any other class, now either permanently or temporarily residing in the territory of the United States, meet with ill treatment at the hands of any other persons, the Government of the United States will exert all its power to devise measures for their protection and to secure to them the same rights, privileges, immunities and exemptions as may be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation, and to which they are entitled by treaty. . . .²

1. Under what circumstances would Chinese immigration be restricted?

2. To whom did the restrictions apply?

²"Treaty Regulating Immigration from China," 17 November 1880, in *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements between the United States of America and Other Powers*, vol. 1, comp. William M. Malloy (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 237 ff.

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3. Who was allowed free passage to the United States?

4. How did the government promise to protect the Chinese?

Chinese Exclusion Act

May 6, 1882

An act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese.

WHEREAS, in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof: Therefore,

Be it enacted, That from and after the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and until the expiration of ten years next after the passage of this act, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States shall be . . . suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or, having so come after the expiration of said ninety days, to remain within the United States.

SEC. 2. That the master of any vessel who shall knowingly bring within the United States on such vessel, and land or permit to be landed, any Chinese laborer, from any foreign port or place, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars for each and every such Chinese laborer so brought, and may be also imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.

SEC. 3. That the two foregoing sections shall not apply to Chinese laborers who were in the United States on the seventeenth day of November, eighteen hundred and eighty, or who shall have come into the same before the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act. . . .

SEC. 6. That in order to the faithful execution of articles one and two of the treaty in this act before mentioned, every Chinese person other than a laborer who may be entitled by said treaty and this act to come within the United States, and who shall be about to come to the United States, shall be identified as so entitled by the Chinese Government in each case, such identity to be evidenced by a certificate issued under the authority of said government, and which certificate shall be in the English language or (if not in the English language) accompanied by a translation into English, stating such right to come, and which certificate shall state the name, title, or official rank, if any, the age, height, and all physical peculiarities, former and present occupation or profession and place of residence in China of the person to whom the certificate is issued and that such person is entitled conformably to the treaty in this act mentioned to come within the United States. . . .

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SEC. 12. That no Chinese person shall be permitted to enter the United States by land without producing to the proper office of customs the certificate in this act required of Chinese persons seeking to land from a vessel. Any Chinese person found unlawfully within the United States shall be caused to be removed therefrom to the country from whence he came, by direction of the President of the United States, and at the cost of the United States, after being brought before some justice, judge, or commissioner of a court of the United States and found to be one not lawfully entitled to be or remain in the United States.

SEC. 13. That this act shall not apply to diplomatic and other officers of the Chinese Government traveling upon the business of that government, whose credentials shall be taken as equivalent to the certificate in this act mentioned, and shall exempt them and their body and household servants from the provisions of this act as to other Chinese persons.

SEC. 14. That hereafter no State court or court of the United States shall admit Chinese to citizenship; and all laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed.

SEC. 15. That the words "Chinese laborers," whenever used in this act, shall be construed to mean both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining.³

5. For how long was the treaty to be in effect?
6. What did the treaty suspend?
7. What restrictions were placed on ship's captains?
8. What punishment could result if the ship's captains violated the terms of the treaty?
9. Who was exempt under the terms of the treaty?
10. What was required of the Chinese government to regulate any other travelers?
11. What would happen to Chinese who are in the United States illegally?
12. How did the treaty affect Chinese diplomats?
13. What was to be the citizenship status of the Chinese?
14. How did the treaty define laborers?

³"Chinese Exclusion Act," 6 May 1882, 22 Stat. 58 ff.

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Twelve Hundred More . . . The Next Two Verses

The song that you read at the beginning of this lesson was written by American workers and reflected their views of Chinese workers coming to the United States. Your task is to develop the next two verses of the song.

The verses must be done from the perspective of a Chinese worker in the South or the Northeast. Consider the following items as you develop your verses:

- What were the motivations for bringing Chinese workers to these regions of the United States?
- What were the contract stipulations for the Chinese workers?
- What type of work did they engage in?
- How were the Chinese received by the native workers in these regions?
- What were the ultimate results of the Chinese presence in these areas?

Be prepared to share your verses with the class.

"Twelve Hundred More"	Your Verses
O workingmen dear, did you hear The news that's goin' around? Another China steamer Has been landed here in town. Today I read the papers, And it grieved my heart full sore To see upon the title page, just O, "Twelve Hundred More!" O, California's coming down, As you can plainly see. They are hiring all the Chinamen and discharging you and me; But strife will be in every town Throughout the Pacific shore, And the cry of old a young shall be, O, damn, "Twelve Hundred More!" ⁸	

⁸"Twelve Hundred More," *The Blue and Grey Songster* (San Francisco: S. S. Greer, 1877). In Linda Perrin, *Coming to America: Immigrants from the Far East* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1980), 32-34.